

more than dollars and cents; it is about real people with real lives.

I recently heard from the South Central Workforce Development Council in Washington State, and they told me about a man they worked with named Damon.

Damon had been laid off from his job testing machine equipment. He held that job for almost 10 years. He and his wife had to move back in with his father, and he said that no matter how hard he tried he could not find work that matched his skills.

Damon had to do something about it. He went to his local one-stop career center and sat down with counselors who talked him through what local employers were looking for, and he decided he was going to learn computer networking. He studied hard and graduated from a local computer technology program. Despite this tough economy, he was able to work with the one-stop center to find a new job in a new field.

Damon was able to get back on his feet and support his family because of this program. He is not alone. Millions of Americans depend on workforce training programs to get the skills they need to get back to work and help our economy grow, including nearly 400,000 in my State of Washington.

House Republicans have proposed eliminating these critical programs and cutting off services for the workers who depend on them. At a time when so many workers are fighting to get back on the job, this would be devastating.

I recently met with a woman named Tiffany from Chehalis, WA. She told me her stepson, Rodney, had some difficult family circumstances and had fallen behind his peers and that she and her husband could not afford the private education they thought he needed to catch up. Then she heard about Head Start from a friend and enrolled Rodney in that program.

Tiffany told me she saw the difference within a few months. Just a short time later, Rodney was ready for kindergarten, and he is now the top reader in his first grade class. Tiffany and her family got the support they needed and they, too, are far from being alone.

Nearly 1 million families and their children depend on Head Start. The Republican proposal we will be voting on this afternoon eliminates services for 218,000 children, including more than 3,000 in my home State. It will close 16,000 classrooms across the country, and it will cause up to 55,000 teachers and staff to lose their jobs.

Again, this extreme slash-and-burn approach is wrong. It would hurt the most vulnerable of our children and families in our country and leave us at a competitive disadvantage in the future.

The Republican proposal also slashes community development block grants by 62 percent. That would eliminate services and decimate housing and eco-

nomic development programs in communities across our country.

It cuts the community health centers so many Americans depend on for their health care, eliminating funding outright for 127 clinics in 38 States, reducing services at over 1,000 centers nationwide, cutting off health care for almost 3 million Americans that will cause 5,000 workers across our country to lose their jobs.

Not only will the Republican proposal devastate middle-class families across this country, it would also halt the beginning of an economic recovery that our families and our small business owners desperately need to take root.

Last month, our economy added over 200,000 private sector jobs, and the unemployment rate fell to the lowest level in 2 years.

We have a long way to go, but I am confident that we have turned the corner and are beginning to move in the right direction. Economists on both the left and the right have come out and said if the Republican proposal from the House were to pass, the economic recovery and millions of jobs across the country would be threatened.

In fact, one independent analysis said the Republican plan could destroy up to 700,000 American jobs in this country, including an estimated 15,000 in my State of Washington. That would be devastating, and we cannot afford to let that happen.

That is why the Senate Democratic proposal would take our country in a very different direction. It would cut spending—billions of dollars, in fact—but it would do so in a responsible and practical way that would protect our middle-class families, those who need it most.

Our proposal continues to make the investments we need as a country to compete and win in the 21st-century economy. Take the highly successful TIGER Program that I helped create. Communities across our country have been competing very hard for resources from this program so they can invest in transportation projects that make significant contributions to the Nation, to their region, or their metropolitan area.

Today, the TIGER Program is putting workers on the job and helping to lay down a strong foundation for economic growth in this country. But the Republican proposal would not only eliminate that program completely and slam the door on communities that want to invest in their infrastructure, it would also take back every penny of funding—all funding already—promised in last year's budget. That will halt 75 projects in 40 States that are ready to go and put 33,000 jobs at risk. It doesn't make any sense. The Democratic proposal would protect that critical investment.

The Republican proposal would also jeopardize public health and the environment by gutting the laws that keep

our air and water clean. It cuts nearly \$2 billion in funding for clean water infrastructure, which our local communities need to keep our families safe, so when you turn on that water in your kitchen you will know it is safe. It slashes the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which, by the way, uses revenue from offshore oil leases to protect some of the most treasured places in our country. But that is not all. The extreme Republican proposal would also slash investments for students and children, including a \$700 million cut to title I funding, which will affect 2,400 schools serving over 1 million students. It cuts Pell grants by 15 percent, which will make it so much harder for kids to go to college today.

The House Republican proposal would even slash some of the bipartisan programs we have created to keep our families safe, including 66 percent cuts to both the Transit Security Grant Program that helps make sure our trains and subways are safe, as well as the Port Security Grant Program that helps protect our critical economic and national security assets across the country. That does not make sense. If a terrorist attack were to occur at one of our ports or transit systems, it would be absolutely devastating for our families and our economy, which is why the Democratic proposal protects these critical investments.

Those are just a few of the examples of the radical and irresponsible cuts that are proposed in the Republican budget.

We, of course, need to cut spending. We need to bring down the deficit. We all agree on that point. But we have to do it responsibly, and we cannot do it on the backs of our middle-class families who are struggling.

I urge my colleagues this afternoon to support the Democratic proposal, and if we cannot pass something today, I urge my Republican colleagues to come to the table and work with us to pass a responsible long-term budget that really does reflect our priorities, gets our workers back on the job, and invests in America's future.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND FREE-TRADE AGREEMENTS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, later today Senators will have an opportunity to take a position on government spending. At a time when Washington is borrowing about \$4 billion a day, Democratic leaders want to cut about \$4.5 billion in government spending for the rest of this fiscal year and call it a day. In other words, they want to take what amounts to a day-and-a-

half long holiday from their out-of-control spending and then return to the status quo for the rest of the year.

Let me add that paying lip service to the threat caused by the deficit is not a substitute for responsible leadership and that the job-destroying tax hikes on small businesses and American families are not the answer to out-of-control Washington spending. At a time when increasing gas prices are already threatening our economic recovery, a minivan tax that some on the other side have proposed will not solve our Nation's fiscal crisis. But I will tell you what it will do. It will destroy jobs and impose a real burden on families every time they fill up at the pump—at a time when people are looking for relief instead.

Democrats' steadfast refusal to cut another dime from the bloated Washington budget has left them no choice, it seems, but to propose raising taxes on American families and small businesses so they can continue spending at unsustainable levels. Republicans, on the other hand, have made a serious proposal to rein in wasteful spending. To me, at least, the choice before us is pretty clear.

As we approach today's vote, it is worth noting that even if we were to pass the biggest spending cuts that have been proposed so far in this debate, it would not even put a dent in the fiscal problems we face as a result of the growth in entitlement spending. Think about it. Democrats have been waging war this week over a proposal to cut \$4.7 billion. Meanwhile, the amount of money we have promised to spend on programs such as Social Security and Medicare—money we do not have—is about \$52 trillion.

This week's debate is just a dress rehearsal for the big stuff, and so far Democrats are showing they are just not up to it. They either lack the stomach or the courage, and the President, as members of his own party point out, is nowhere to be found on this issue. I have talked about this leadership vacuum repeatedly this week on the entitlements and how their unchecked growth threatens to bury all of us in red ink before we know it. We can argue about whether to cut \$5 billion or \$60 billion in day-to-day expenses all we want, but the fact is, even if we hit the bigger number, we are still staring at a catastrophe. And the President appears to be totally uninterested—uninterested—in leading us to a bipartisan solution the way Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton did the last time we faced a crisis of this magnitude.

When it comes to another crisis, the jobs crisis, the President is not just failing to lead, he is flatout barring the door with a mountain of stifling new regulations and calculated inaction on outstanding free-trade agreements with Colombia and Panama.

This morning, the U.S. Trade Representative is set to testify before the Finance Committee to voice the administration's support of a trade agree-

ment with South Korea. While we support the administration's position on South Korea, the lack of leadership on these two other countries which signed free-trade agreements with us more than 3 years ago is completely disheartening. The reason for inaction is stunning. Union bosses do not want to see them passed. For some reason, they seem to think that expanding the market for U.S. goods into Colombia and Panama somehow hurts them, which is absurd, absolutely absurd. The administration has previously expressed tepid support for these deals, an acknowledgment that expanding markets for U.S. goods can only help U.S. workers and that the picture in Colombia is better than the labor bosses would have us believe, but they have failed to follow through.

The irony of union opposition to these trade deals is that an expanded U.S. presence in Latin America can only help the workers there by exporting U.S. business standards and practices, and, of course, more exports for U.S. firms means more jobs for U.S. workers in the United States.

In the last few weeks, company after company has come before Congress to testify how important accessing Latin American markets is for their future and to create jobs right in America. According to the chamber of commerce, failing to pass these trade agreements, along with the trade agreement with South Korea, could cost us 380,000 U.S. jobs.

While we dither on these agreements, Colombia has moved on. Having been stiff-armed by the United States, it is finding other trade partners. Naturally, Colombia has turned to other countries and, worse, still is warming relations with Hugo Chavez in neighboring Venezuela. Last week, Colombia President Juan Manuel Santos was quoted referring to Chavez as his "new best friend"—a man who just last year accused Santos of plotting to assassinate him.

At a time when nearly 14 million Americans are looking for work, the President should be listening to those of us who come to him with ways to create jobs. And this is one of them. The administration has no excuse for failing to act on these trade agreements. It is in the interest of our country to approve them. It would create jobs at home at a time when we desperately need them. I am confident Congress could pass these on a bipartisan basis today.

I urge the administration to act today, and not just on South Korea but on Colombia and Panama. I, for one, am prepared to do everything in my power to pass these agreements, all of them together, this year.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JOHANNES. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CAP AND TRADE

Mr. JOHANNES. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the administration's ill-advised cap-and-trade agenda and to support a bipartisan bill that I cosponsored. The Energy Tax Prevention Act would stop EPA from going around Congress and using regulations to implement the administration's failed cap-and-trade agenda. The bill is necessary because the administration is marching ahead with its cap-and-trade agenda even though the American people clearly want to focus on job creation, not policies that destroy jobs.

For evidence that the administration is marching ahead, one need only look at the President's budget. It clearly states "continues to support greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the United States in the range of 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 and 83 percent by 2050." Not surprisingly, these reductions are nearly identical to those proposed in the Waxman-Markey House cap-and-trade bill. Americans rejected that legislation because it would have increased taxes on everyone—anyone who turns on a light switch, buys American-made products, fills up their gas tank.

The Energy Tax Prevention Act would prevent the administration from using its regulatory powers to circumvent Congress and implement this energy tax that Americans rejected last year. It is about protecting jobs—manufacturing jobs, for example—and it puts Congress back in the driver's seat in charge of energy policy, taking it back from unelected bureaucrats at the too-often overreaching EPA.

Above all, this bill rejects the notion that placing additional energy tax burdens on Americans is good policy. As the price of oil climbs and gas prices follow, our bill says: Don't hit Americans with another tax. Make no mistake, cap-and-trade policies would drive up the cost of everything, transportation fuels and electricity leading the way. Nobody disagrees with this understanding. In fact, the central policy mechanism of all of these proposals is making the use and production of fossil fuels more expensive.

The Congressional Budget Office has weighed in on this issue, and they put it this way:

... a cap-and-trade program would thus lead to price increases for energy and energy-intensive goods and services ... Such price increases would stem from the restriction on emissions ... Indeed, the price increases would be essential to the success of a cap-and-trade program.

In other words, these efforts are designed to make oil, gas, and coal-fired electricity more expensive, and the